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ABSTRACT

The report provides an overview of recent developments in immersion second language education in Australia, contrasting the Australian experience with the Canadian one. Particular attention is paid to some developments that may have significance for the future of foreign language teaching, such as "cold-start" late immersion programs in secondary schools; teacher training for immersion language instruction; in-country intensive/immersion language programs; a study comparing the effectiveness of intensive and immersion approaches; the emergence of the Australian Association of Language Immersion Teachers; and publication of the association's journal as a forum for discussion. It is concluded that there is a danger that the lack of monitoring of the effectiveness of immersion experiments at primary and secondary levels could lead to waning interest of funding authorities. The most promising developments seen at the higher education level are the development of teacher training programs with content-based instruction in the target language and an emerging focus on combining intensive and immersion instruction at this level. (Author/MSE)

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RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN AUSTRALIAN IMMERSION LANGUAGE EDUCATION*

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ABSTRACT

Immersion French language education began in 1965 in Canada as a grass-roots movement. Currently around 300,000 Canadian students are enrolled in programs. The success of immersion language instruction in Canada has inspired a number of immersion language programs in Australia. These are extremely varied but one thing they do have in common is divergence from the Canadian models. A unique combination of circumstances is making it possible for Australians to experiment with immersion-type language instruction in quite daring ways.

An overview is provided of recent developments in immersion language education in Australia, contrasting the Australian experience with the Canadian one. Particular attention is paid to some developments that may have significance for the future of foreign language teaching, such as 'cold-start' late immersion programs in secondary schools; teacher training for immersion language teaching; in-country intensive/immersion language programs; a study comparing the effectiveness of intensive and immersion approaches; the emergence of the Australian Association of Language Immersion Teachers; and publication of the AALIT journal as a forum for discussion.

It is concluded that there is a danger that the lack of monitoring of the effectiveness of the immersion experiments at primary and secondary level could lead to waning interest of funding authorities. The most promising developments at tertiary level are thought to be the development of teacher training programs with content-based instruction in the target language; and an emerging focus on combining intensive and immersion instruction at tertiary level.

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes and discusses some recent developments in immersion language education in Australia, with emphasis on those that offer innovations.

First, a few clarifications are called for, because there is much ambiguity and confusion regarding the terminology of immersion language education. The term 'immersion' is a metaphor for an experience in which the language learners receive intensive exposure to the target language, an experience which may be thought of as a 'language bath'. This intensive exposure to the target language (TL) is meant to replicate the natural conditions in which first language (L1) learning occurs, i.e., the incidental internalization of new knowledge by the learner from rich TL data while focusing on the meaning being commmunicated.

Immersion education is of course most popular and widespread in Canada, and Canadians have developed experience and expertise with this approach since 1965.

In Canada a 'full immersion' program means a bilingual program in which a second language is taught through one or more areas of the curriculum and the two languages share equal time. It does not, as is often thought, preclude use of the L1, but provides dual, or bilingual, instruction. It would however normally include an initial period of 'total immersion' in which the entire instruction is in L2 (Swain, 1993). This is where the confusion begins: some people conflate full immersion and total immersion. So, total immersion is the initial 'language bath' which begins a full immersion program, and it is thought to be a necessary component of program design if the proper immersion effect is to be experienced.

The term 'partial immersion' has also caused confusion. A 'partial immersion' program, in Canadian terminology, means a program in which at least half the regular school instruction is through L2 for an extended period of time, but which does not include a period of total immersion. So the amount of instruction time in a partial immersion program is actually the same as in a full immersion program(not counting the initial period); the expression 'partial' just refers to the fact that there

is no initial period of total immersion, which means the students have not had the full experience of the 'language bath' (Wesche, 1993a).

As well as the main categories of immersion there are many varied kinds of bilingual programs where the target language (TL) is used for a smaller proportion of instruction time. Some writers have mistakenly used the term 'partial immersion' to refer to programs that have much less than 50% of their instruction time in the TL. It has been suggested that these would be better described as 'partial bilingual' or 'immersion-type' programs to distinguish them from partial immersion programs in the Canadian sense. Another suggested term is 'enhanced' or 'enriched'. However, there is a further complication: the word 'bilingual' has come to be used to refer mainly to bilingual programs that aim at language maintenance, while the word 'immersion' has caught the popular imagination and gained currency with reference to bilingual foreign language instruction.

What is common to all these programs is that the language teaching is content-based, i.e., the TL is used as an instructional medium to study other subjects. Content-based learning is the other essential characteristic of immersion education (Swain, 1993). It is important to keep this in mind, because otherwise immersion can be very easily confused with direct-method language teaching. In direct-method language teaching the TL is also used exclusively as the medium of instruction, but the focus of attention is on the language as an object of study. An essential characteristic of immersion education is that the TL is the medium, not the object of the instruction, and the language learning is incidental.

In this paper I have used the terms 'immersion' or 'immersion-type' (sometimes rather loosely) in the popular sense to refer to simultaneous teaching of language and subject matter, with or without the initial 'language bath'.

Within an immersion program, the TL may also be taught as a subject in its own right, though this has not been considered essential (Edwards, 1990). Nevertheless, instruction does not have to be entirely content-based either, and increasingly suggestions have been made of pedagogical modifications that can enhance the approach (e.g. Swain, 1988; Wong Fillmore, 1985; Harley, 1992; Wesche, 1993b).

Obviously in an immersion classroom the role of the teacher as a model and a source of input and feedback is central. This is a very teacher-centred approach and an approach which demands much of the teacher. The teacher should be very fluent and must be capable of teaching another subject/subjects besides a language. Teacher supply is a major problem for immersion programs, even in Canada where there is a big Francophone community. It is due to the lack of local teacher supply and proximity to Asia that some of the Australian in-country tertiary immersion programs are being developed for Asian languages, which will be described later in this paper.

Language teaching does not occur in a vacuum, but in a dynamic relationship with society, so it is important when comparing programs to look at what social forces they have been developed in response to. For the most part, Canadian immersion programs can be said to have been a response to a local social condition of bilingualism. In Ireland and Wales, bilingual programs have been set up for purposes of heritage language maintenance (Morgan, 1988). In England, partial bilingual programs called section bilingues in a few secondary schools have been designed specifically as enrichment programs catering for a talented stream of students (Hadley, 1988; Winfield, 1988). According to Genesee, 1985, immersion programs have mainly been adopted in United States primary schools for three purposes: as linguistic/cultural educational enrichment, e.g. the Culver City program; as magnet schools to bring about a more balanced ethnolinguistic mix, e.g. the Cincinnati program; and as a means of promoting two-way bilingualism in communities with large non-English-speaking background populations, e.g. the San Diego Bilingual Immersion Program.

In Australia, the main reason for setting up immersion programs in schools has been the wish to find a more effective pedagogy, but the impetus has tended to come from teachers rather from dissatisfied parents as in Canada. State and federal governments in Australia have been promoting the learning of foreign languages, particularly Asian languages, as part of a larger policy aimed at increasing the nation's international competitiveness. Language teachers are leading the charge in this push to make Australians multilingual. A major problem for language teaching and learning in Australia is the lack of a domain for use of the TL. Quinn, 1995, argues cogently that language acquisition will only occur if

there is an area of life where the TL needs to be used to achieve something which the learner wants to achieve. Proficiency is the outcome of use, and there will be no use unless an appropriate domain is available. Although we are a multicultural society in Australia, most language learners do not have access to a domain for use of the TL. Immersion programs provide such a domain, and this is one reason why Australian teachers have intuitively perceived their advantages. Immersion provides, albeit in a limited way, a setting where the TL is to be used, a communicative need to do something using the TL, and a role relationship with speakers of the TL.

It should be pointed out that a major reason for the success of immersion in schools, not always not appreciated, is that it increases the amount of instruction time available. A generous exposure to the TL is a major factor in ensuring the success of any program of language study, regardless of the methodology (Swain and Lapkin, 1982; Fleming and Whitla, 1990; Mann, 1992). In Canadian immersion programs, students have about half their instruction time in French. Content-based instruction, by offering 'two for one', makes it possible to increase the amount of input in the TL in the context of the normal school curriculum (Wesche, 1993). To put this point even more strongly, if Canadian students were to spend half their instruction time actually studying French, they might do at least as well. In reality this would be impossible, because the demands of the curriculum would not allow it, and students would become terribly bored if they were made to study a language all the time. Teaching other subjects through the language ensures that input is non-trivial, varied, and sufficiently intensive to allow natural acquisition to occur while the other requirements of a general education are also able to be met (Wesche).

These somewhat lengthy definitions and clarifications have been included to establish a clear picture of immersion education, so that the significance of the Australian developments can be appreciated.

IMMERSION PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

There is a lot of interest in immersion in Australia at present and some naive experiments, particularly at primary level. Although the actual numbers of students involved are small, the level of interest is shown by the fact that most of the state Departments of Education have inserted clauses in their LOTE policy documents about the desirability of bilingual and/or immersion programs, and some are actually giving them financial support and promoting them (Berthold, 1993a), albeit at times in a stop-start manner that works against continuity (vide Moellner 1993a).

Primary bilingual programs

Several new primary immersion-type language programs have been set up around the country, but they are not described in detail here because the main things that are innovative about them are that some of them are for languages such as Greek and Italian that probably have not been taught in bilingual programs before in anglophone societies. The other thing that is different about them, but not exactly an innovation, is that a number are organised on an insertion model, generally not the optimum approach in the primary school context, because there tends to be a lack of commitment to the language program by the rest of the teachers. This is occurring mainly because of insufficient funding. Some of these so-called immersion programs are actually direct method and some of them are only for very short periods of as little as two hours per week. There appears to be virtually no systematic monitoring of primary bilingual programs (vide Elder, 1989; Dellora, 1991; Fernandez, 1992; Jamieson, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Mascaro et al, 1993; Mascaro, 1994; Moellner, 1993a, 1993b; Bassett, 1994; Win Pe, 1994).

Late immersion programs in secondary schools

Before I can explain how the Australian late immersion programs are innovative, I need to provide some background on how the Canadian immersion programs are organised.

The two main types of Canadian immersion programs are early and late immersion. There is also middle or 'delayed total' immersion. **Figure 1** provides an overview of Canadian immersion and an outline of program variants taken from one provided by Mari Wesche (Wesche 1993a). **Figure 2** shows typical patterns of early, middle and late immersion programs in graphic form.

From **Figures 1 and 2** it is clear that the early immersion programs begin with 100 per cent instruction in French in the first two years (K-1), so that children learn the concepts and skills of basic literacy and numeracy concurrently with basic language. This exposure decreases to about 50%. In contrast, the late immersion students have had 'core French' from the start of schooling until they enter the intensive period of total immersion in grades 6 and/or 7, which is followed by several bilingual years (the proportion of L1/L2 varies from school to school).

It had been thought for years that the early start was an essential ingredient of the success of immersion language education; however, late immersion programs have been found to be very effective. In fact, research carried out in Montreal over several years in the seventies found that students attending 2-year late immersion programs achieve the same level of proficiency in all aspects of French as do students who have attended early total immersion programs, despite the fact that the later immersion students have had considerably less exposure to French -- approximately 1,400 hours compared to 5,000 hours by the end of Grade 8 (Genesee, 1981). See also Harley, 1992.

What has been happening in Australia is that some late immersion programs have started up in secondary schools which are different in certain characteristics from both the early and the late Canadian programs. Students start 'cold' with virtually no previous exposure to the language, yet study academic subjects such as science, history and mathematics concurrently with acquiring basic language skills. It would seem that these programs would be asking too much of students, but in fact they appear for the most part to be quite successful so far -- for reasons that will be explained.

Figure 1 - Immersion in Canada: Program Variants

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:

1 Differing program entry grades and grade levels for intensive L2 exposure

2 Grade level where L1 is introduced and proportion of instruction in L1

MAJOR TYPES:

Early total immersion

- Monolingual phase: kindergarten and early primary in L2 (French)
- Bilingual phase: L1 (English) language arts introduced in grade 2 or 3; gradual increase in instruction through English to approximately half of instruction in each language by grade 5 or 6

Middle/delayed total immersion

- 20-40 minutes per day L2 (French) instruction from kindergarten or grade 1
- Monolingual phase: grade 3 or 4, 1-2 years
- Bilingual phase: increasing English to approximately half by grade 6

Late immersion

- 20-40 minutes per day L2 (French) instruction from kindergarten or grade 1
- Monolingual phase: grade 6 or 7 (or both); English language arts period as variant
- Bilingual phase from grade 8; varying proportions

Bilingual high school

- One third to half of regular academic courses (including L2 [French] language arts and literature) through French, grades 9-12/13.

Partial immersion

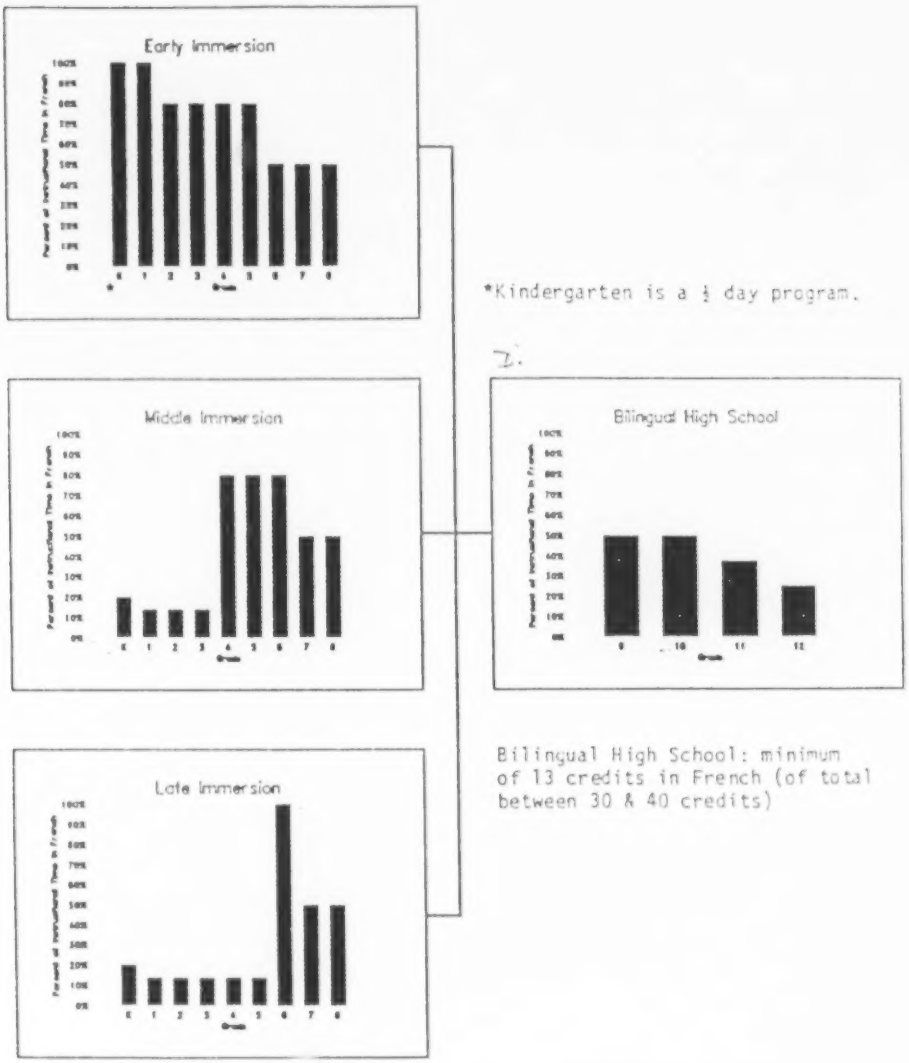
- At least half of regular school instruction through L2 (French) for an extended period. One possibility is half of instruction in each language through elementary school
- Popular entry points include grade 1, grade 4 and grade 5.

(Source: Wesche, 1993a)

Figure 2 -- French immersion in Canada

Sample programs: Ottawa Board of Education

Proportion of the school day in French (L_2) for students in 3 alternate elementary-junior programs and bilingual high school.



*Kindergarten is a ½ day program.

Bilingual High School: minimum of 13 credits in French (of total between 30 & 40 credits)

Cumulative instructional hours in French

	Early Immersion	Middle Immersion	Late Immersion
K - Gr. 6	4680	2610	1590
K - Gr. 8	5580	3910	2490

Bilingual high school adds approximately 1000 further hours of instruction in French.

The Benowa partial immersion French program in Queensland, which has been running since 1985, is of particular interest because it was the first of this type. Interestingly, this program, the first in Australia, was a teacher-inspired spontaneous development, not modelled on Canadian immersion education (Berthold). Initially it was envisaged simply as a one-year enrichment experience for the more talented students entering high school (Year 8 in Queensland). During that first year, however, the potential of the program impressed itself upon students, parents and teachers, with the result that the program was extended to the first three years of secondary school and is still running a decade later.

Five core subjects (60-65% of the instructional time) are taught entirely in French. These subjects are Mathematics, Science, Physical Education, Social Science and French. In three years the students complete 1600 hours of lessons in French. They return to the monolingual curriculum after Year 10, but they can continue to study French as a subject in Years 11 and 12. Participation is by choice, and students are also selected for aptitude (Benowa State High School 1992; Berthold, 1989; 1990; 1991; Queensland State Dept. of Education 1993).

An essential feature of the program is an exchange program that exists with College Georges Baudoux, in Noumea, New Caledonia. Every second year, Years 9 and 10 of the immersion program go to New Caledonia for 4 weeks, where the students are billeted with French families and go to school with the families' children. In alternate years, approximately 40 students from College Georges Baudoux are hosted at Benowa. This ensures that every year there is at least a 4-week block of continuous contact with French-speaking families and children (Berthold, 1993b). These exhanges probably contribute strongly to the Benowa program's success.

Although an evaluation of the Benowa program has not been carried out, students have evidently done well academically, with individual students winning a number of prizes or top examination results (Berthold, 1993b). It has been the subject of an M.A. thesis (de Courcy, 1992). The program's continued existence after a decade, and despite the departure of its instigator, speaks for its success.

A similar partial immersion program began at Mansfield State High School, Queensland, in 1991, with 30 Year 8 students. The program at Mansfield covers Years 8 to 10. It begins with a 6-week intensive French course in Year 8 (occupying 15 out of 26 hours available instruction time). Students study Mathematics, Science, History and Geography in French, and they also study French as a subject, amounting to approximately 12 hours instructional time per week (50%) devoted to French. 450 out of 1050 hours in the school year are devoted to tuition in French (including study of the language). The school has also arranged a one-month exchange visit for immersion students with a New Caledonian school (Mansfield S.H.S., 1992; Qld State Dept of Education, 1993; de Jabrun 1994b). The Mansfield program has been the subject of study for an M.Ed. thesis, which focused on the performances of Year 8 immersion students in mathematics and science (de Jabrun, 1994a, 1994b).

Following the example of Benowa and Mansfield, Kenmore State High School, also in Queensland, initiated a partial immersion German program, with the first student intake of Year 8 students in 1992. At Kenmore the students learn Mathematics, Science, History and Geography in German; they also study German as a subject. The breakdown of subjects is rather complicated, but in effect students receive a minimum of 50% tuition time in German in each year and then join the regular Year 11 classes (Kenmore State HSC 1992; Qld State Dept of Education, 1993). Students are given the same assessment in their subjects as other classes, only translated into German, so that systematic comparisons can be made (Kruger, 1993).

Also in 1992, the Southport School, an Anglican boys' school near Benowa State High School, set up a partial immersion French program to run from Years 8 to 10, using curriculum materials developed at Benowa. Students learn Mathematics, Science, Social Science and Religious Education in French, and also study French as a subject (Davies, 1993).

An partial immersion Indonesian program commenced in 1993 at Park Ridge State High School in Brisbane. It was followed by one class of 28 volunteer Year 8 students, who took Indonesian as a language for 4 periods a week, and also 4 periods each of mathematics, social education and science (Qld State Dept of Education, 1993; Sneddon, 1993). This program is continuing.

A Modern Standard Chinese program began in 1994 at Urangan State High School in the Wide Bay Region, Queensland. The subjects chosen for content-based language learning were mathematics, computer science, life/health skills. Chinese is also studied as a subject (Queensland Department of Education).

All the above programs are in Queensland and are similar in design. In the other parts of Australia secondary immersion programs have tended to be less intensive in terms of the proportion of instruction time devoted to the TL, while still expecting students to study normal school subjects as they learn basic language.

On the continuum of difficulty one of the most challenging for students was an immersion-type Indonesian program which was set up at Rowville Secondary College in Victoria in 1992, a case study of which formed the subject of my M.A. thesis (Read, 1993). A unique feature of this program was that students were selected at random rather than for ability. Furthermore, they received only 20% of their instruction (6 x 50-minute periods per week) in Indonesian. In addition, they did not study Indonesian as a subject at all, and had no introductory exposure to the language. Language learning was entirely incidental, acquired in the process of learning the school subject, which was Social Education (a composite subject of history, geography and social studies). It is interesting that although the bilingual students appeared to have learned the same amount of Indonesian as the control group taught by normal methodology by the same teacher, they did significantly better in their content knowledge.

A program at Golden Grove High School in South Australia had a group of 14 Year 9 students learning Spanish through mathematics in 9 x 40-minute periods per week. These students were volunteers and had already studied Spanish in Year 8 (de Miguel, 1993).

In a pilot program at Killarney Heights High School in New South Wales in Term 4, 1993, a group of 10 students from the Year 10 French class volunteered to study a 5-week unit of their Science course through the medium of French (Avery, 1994).

It is probably over-optimistic for people to expect that there will be much benefit in terms of language acquisition from programs that attempt to

achieve the effects of immersion with minimal exposure to the TL, but there probably are some benefits to students from the experience, and at least these attempts show a healthy willingness to experiment.

To generalise from the above descriptions, it appears that Australian teachers are developing a unique approach to late immersion education which is quite different from the Canadian programs, in that Australian secondary students are being asked to learn conceptually advanced material through the medium of a language they hardly know.

Why is this happening? In general there is a lack of articulation of language programs between primary and secondary schools in Australia (in contrast to Canada, where French in taught throughout the primary school system), so it is difficult to do otherwise in setting up a secondary immersion program. Another factor may be the prevalence of an optimistic, 'give it a go' mentality in Australian society -- what could be called the 'frontier factor'. A third factor could be the relative freedom in curriculum decision-making that is given to Australian schools within state-defined curriculum frameworks -- especially with regard to setting up language programs.

It seems to me that these programs are stretching the boundaries of what children can be expected to achieve in immersion classroom situations, and it will be very interesting to observe how they develop over time. It is unfortunate that they have not received more systematic evaluation.

Before moving on to tertiary programs, I would like to make two more points about the secondary ones. First, an observation that emerges consistently from the reports on these programs is that the immersion students are forced by the nature of the approach to make more of an effort to cope with their school subjects; they spend more time studying; and they become better organised students. These late immersion programs are for the most part highly selective (vide de Jabrun, 1994b), so one reason for students' academic success must surely be that only able and committed students are allowed into them. It should be pointed out in this connection that Australian society is aggressively egalitarian and streaming of students in schools has been frowned upon in all subjects except mathematics. It seems probable that late partial immersion programs in Queensland are actually operating as a kind of de facto streaming, placing groups of selected students in a highly challenging

study environment to which they respond by increasing the amount of effort they put into their school work, with predictably increased levels of achievement.

Second, the Rowville program was unique among secondary programs in that students were selected at random from the general school population. Thus they had no particular interest or aptitude for language learning. That program has now ceased with the departure of the teacher. However, I went back to the school in 1994 and surveyed immersion and regular students for attitudes to learning Indonesian. Without exception, the ex-immersion students said they had liked learning Indonesian better in the immersion class. The Rowville program provides evidence that late immersion programs do not have to be highly selective. Average-ability students can also benefit from the experience.

IMMERSION IN UNIVERSITIES

Teacher training through immersion

Courses offering training in immersion teaching methodology have already been developed in Canada, of course. Some Australian universities have now developed teacher education courses which offer simultaneous instruction in language and subject matter.

In 1992, an ambitious pre-service teacher education program called the Language and Culture Initial Teacher Education Program (LACITEP) was begun at the Faculty of Education at Central Queensland University. It was established with the support of the Languages and Cultures Unit of the Queensland Department of Education. The details given below draw heavily on two papers by Tony Erben and colleagues (Erben, 1993; Erben et al., 1993) and publicity literature from Central Queensland University.

The state of Queensland recently introduced a plan called the LOTE Initiative, which aims to provide all young Queenslanders with the opportunity to learn a foreign language, and calls for the expansion of LOTE teaching at primary level. The LACITEP program was developed in response to the increase in demand for primary teachers of LOTE that was expected to result from this policy. LACITEP is advertised as the world's first pre-service teacher education degree program offered through

immersion in Japanese. 70 to 80 per cent of the program is delivered through Japanese. It began as a three-year B.Tch. degree program but has been expanded in 1995 to a four-year B.Ed.

Students gain specialisation in all the following areas: generalist primary, Japanese LOTE, immersion education and Asian studies. Their studies include:

- teaching theory and practice
- administration, management and intercultural communication skills
- LOTE methodology and SLA theory
- Japanese language and socio-cultural aspects of Japanese life

It is thus a multi-dimensional degree producing multi-skilled graduates. The aim is to prepare graduates for careers in industry as well as education.

LACITEP accepts students who have completed Japanese to Year 12 in high school with a Very High Achievement or High Achievement rating (the top two ratings) and/or proficiency in Japanese at the Australian Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ASLPRS) of at least 1. They must also undergo a formal selection process consisting of a 20-minute interview in Japanese, a two-hour written examination based on the Japan Noryoku Shiken level 4, a listening comprehension test, and an evaluation of their reasons and motives as well as their 'teacher potential'.

Practicums are sequenced so that students experience mainstream general and FL teaching, before having to deal with immersion teaching.

A highly innovative feature of the course is the link between the LACITEP program and the Saturday Morning Japanese School (SMJS) that is operated by the University of Central Queensland and is open to the wider community. Beginner learners of any age can enrol and family group enrolments are encouraged.

The SMJS school is structured in such a way that the student teachers have an opportunity to run the school. The school is run in 5-week units. In each unit, the LACITEP students are assigned particular roles: one takes on

the role of SMJS principal, another becomes deputy principal (and de facto school accountant), three become subject masters, one becomes a resource person, while the remaining students take on the role of classroom teacher. The classroom teachers' lessons are videotaped and subsequently deconstructed in tutorials. These roles are rotated at the end of each 5-week period, In this way the trainee teachers are able to learn school administrative, managerial and accounting procedures which are not included in a normal in-school practicum, as well as teaching skills.

An in-country practicum component of two months is also part of the program, which comprises intensive Japanese language studies through the Japan Foundation, fieldwork as a Teacher Assistant in a Japanese school and a research project. All students are billeted to Japanese families. It is hoped that students will establish contacts and links to people and institutions in Japan and that the in-country practicum will become the initial stage in a lifelong process of ongoing visits.

The University of Newcastle's Faculty of Education set up a pilot bilingual program in 1994 to train primary generalist teachers with a LOTE (Languages other than English) specialisation, in response to the New South Wales Department of Education's current plan for the introduction of languages into primary schools, similar to the Queensland policy. This plan calls for 50% of primary school students to be studying a LOTE for two hours per week, with implementation to be completed by the year 2000. The plan will require increasing numbers of primary teachers who have proficiency in a LOTE.

In the Newcastle pilot program one group of students has been following a different program from the rest, which includes 35 credit points of French language arts and 35 credit points of French as the medium of delivery for some of the content areas of the curriculum. German is being offered in the same format to the second cohort in 1995 (Berthold, 1993b). The total amount of credit points in the four-year degree is 320, thus only a small proportion of total instruction time is devoted to the TL. Beginners are accepted into this program, therefore the attempt is to teach beginning language partially through a content-based approach at tertiary level. The only comparable attempts I am aware of were at the University of Utah (Sternfeld, 1992) and the ULTRA project, described later in this paper.

In the area of secondary teacher training, a 4-year B.Ed. (Languages Other than English - Japanese) course was begun in 1993 at Griffith University in Queensland, to prepare students to become teachers of Japanese in secondary schools. The details about this program given below draw heavily on publicity literature from Griffith University, an internal document setting out the structure of the course, and personal communications from Enju Norris, Coordinator of the B.Ed.(LOTE) course at Griffith. Like LACITEP, the Griffith program was developed in response to Queensland government policy for language study in schools. Students undertake a partial immersion program in which they use the Japanese language to study aspects of Japanese life and culture as well as the methodology of LOTE teaching. Successful completion of Japanese to Year 12 (or equivalent) is required to gain admission.

In the Griffith program, the study of the Main Teaching Area (Japanese) is conducted entirely in Japanese throughout four years, amounting to a total of 9 semester subjects, each requiring 4 hours class time per week (out of a total of approximately 32 subjects).

In the first semester of the first year students undertake a bridging subject (4 hours class time per week), in which they spend about half their time focusing on language and about half their time in content-based study of various topics. This has been found to be necessary because the immersion approach is so different from the type of language study students have been exposed to in high school. Students find the first term very stressful until they begin to think in Japanese instead of translating into English. About ten minutes per week is allowed for discussion in English of problems that students cannot express in Japanese. The second semester is more content based. In Years 2, 3 and 4, all subjects in the Japanese program are content-based, with their content being derived either from aspects of Japanese culture or from methodology of LOTE teaching. About a quarter of their class time is still occupied with language-focused study, however.

It is interesting that the university programs that have introduced immersion are not in language departments but in education departments, in courses related to the methodology of language teaching.

Remembering that this is a movement that began in a kindergarten and has gradually moved up the educational hierarchy, education faculties may be its conduit to acceptance at tertiary levels.

Immersion teacher training by distance education

In what is possibly a world first, a distance education unit called Immersion Language Teaching is being offered in 1995 by the University of Southern Queensland, in an attempt to address the lack of training programs for those wanting to establish or already teaching in immersion language programs in their schools. It is offered by distance education because of the far-flung distribution of the potential students, from all corners of Australia -- and even overseas. The course is particularly aimed at teachers who can teach a suitable content area and happen to be bilingual, to give them the methodology to teach language through immersion. It is not language-specific nor specific to any level. It is very much a hands-on program designed as a lifebelt for teachers who are trying to cope in the immersion classroom situation.

In-country study programs

International exchange programs are nothing new, nor are in-country intensive vacation language courses on the enclave model. Hundreds of Australians have attended the highly successful intensive vacation courses run by the University of Sydney and Monash University in Indonesia. These enclave courses are very effective in increasing confidence in speaking because the students are immersed in the target culture, especially if they have homestay accommodation. Generally language classes are held in the mornings and the afternoons are devoted to other activities, so that text-based study is counterpointed with field experience in a way that cannot be done in Australia. Students however tend to remain essentially in an expatriate enclave and cluster socially by origin (Stange, 1994).

In an attempt to expose students more completely to Indonesian ways of teaching and interacting, Australian universities are developing new programs where an enclave-type language course at a foreign university is

followed by a semester of study in a normal university program, usually of a subject that the students have some prior knowledge of, i.e., one of their major subject areas, for academic credit. Students generally gain academic credit for a semester of language study, rather than for the study of the content, but the trend is to give credit for the content as well. These programs have not been described as immersion education, but in fact, students are studying language through content, delivered in the medium of the TL, i.e., learning language through immersion.

Murdoch University in Western Australia pioneered this approach with their Bachelor of Asian Studies degree. The Murdoch program was initiated by academics in response to the difficulties faced by anglophone Australian students in developing fluency in Asian languages within conventional degree structures using orthodox teaching practices. In order to overcome the obvious limitations on class time available within a conventional 3-year B.A. degree, and also to reduce the problem of detachment due to studying an Asian language in an Australian context, in 1990 Murdoch University introduced a 4-year Bachelor of Asian Studies degree which allows students of Indonesian, Japanese or Chinese to spend up to two semesters 'in-country'.

The Indonesian program is the one which particularly has the nature of an immersion program. The 'in-country' study in Indonesia can be taken as either a single semester special intensive course in Indonesian for foreigners (the enclave model) as part of a conventional 3-year degree; or a 2-semester sequence, beginning with the special course for foreigners and followed by a second semester as a regular student at an Indonesian university, studying subjects selected from a range of normal undergraduate courses (as part of the new 4-year degree).

The Murdoch model is gaining popularity and has since been adopted by other universities, notably the Australian National University, the Northern Territory University and the University of New England (Hill, 1994).

A program designed along these lines but at a more advanced level is an innovative one-year intensive-immersion Graduate Diploma in Indonesian Language and Culture that James Cook University of North Queensland began in 1994. This course consists of 20 weeks of intensive

classroom work at JCU designed to ensure that participants are able to function in the academic, business and social environments of Indonesia, i.e., with a focus on functional language and sociocultural understanding. This is followed by a 12-week immersion component at Diponegoro University in Semarang, Central Java, where participants attend normal lectures and tutorials and meet with relevant industry representatives. This part of the course is fairly unstructured.

The program is designed to provide practical skills for people doing business in Indonesia, while being flexible enough to accommodate teachers and learners with a wide variety of other academic interests. Previous knowledge of Indonesian is not required. Numbers of students in each class are limited to ten, so that aspects of the course can be tailored to suit individual students and to ensure the maximum amount of individual attention. It is quite an expensive course, by the way, but students are not lacking.

A new development is the "Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies" which is being proposed and initially sponsored by Murdoch University. The aim of this consortium is to provide, for academic credit, a variety of study programs of one and two semesters duration in Indonesia for Australian students. One of the options, which is expected to be extremely popular, will be to integrate a preparatory intensive semester course for foreigners with facilitated entry into regular Indonesian university courses, on the Murdoch model. The plan will make it easier and cheaper for other universities to offer full credit for 'in-country' courses as part of their course structure whilst reducing costs and ensuring adequate academic support and pastoral care.

ACICIS in my opinion has the potential to increase exponentially the number of Australians learning Indonesian through this sequence of intensive and immersion learning experiences. Here we see Indonesia's proximity and the relative cheapness of in-country study there being turned to advantage in a way that could be used in other places where in-country study programs could similarly be set up with relative ease and economy.

Comparison of the effectiveness of intensive and immersion instruction

In 1990 the Australian Government carried out a Discipline Review of Modern Language in Higher Education (Leal et al, 1991). A panel of three academics was commissioned to visit and survey all the universities in Australia and to report on all aspects of their teaching of modern languages. In particular, the Review Panel was asked to "identify and promulgate best practice and promising innovations." What was being practised and what was seen as ideal often did not correspond. The normal practice of university language departments is to employ up to five hours a week to cover a curriculum embracing language knowledge, language use and literature. The advocated practice, however, was to teach intensively and to follow an immersion approach.

There were found to be several reasons why language departments tend not to practise what they advocate. One is that there is ambivalence regarding the proper role of modern language departments in universities: whether it is primarily to teach language or to initiate students into the literature and culture for which the language is the gateway. Another is that it is seen as impossible in the university context to put language study units out of line with units in other disciplines in the modular degree structure. As well, these approaches have not yet been successfully used as part of regular degree programs sufficiently to inspire confidence.

At the same time, a succession of reports commissioned by Australian state and federal governments has recognised an urgent need to upgrade the quality and extent of the teaching of Asian languages in the Australian education system at all levels.

Against this background, then, a joint research project between Edith Cowan University in Western Australia and the Guangzhou Foreign Language University, China, has been seeking to find out whether university students achieve greater proficiency when instruction is given intensively or by immersion approaches. Called the ULTRA Project, standing for Universities' Language Teaching Research Agreement, it has been conducting research in both Australia (with respect to the teaching of

Chinese) and in China (with respect to the teaching of English). The project was originally funded for three years, commencing in 1992, but has been extended.

Just to clarify what is meant by 'intensive' as opposed to 'immersion', immersion language education is per se intensive because substantial time is devoted to the TL. Of course it is possible to have unintensive content-based language programs, e.g. some of the ones described earlier in this paper, but these should really not be considered immersion programs.

Although intensive courses are often thought of simply in terms of condensation, i.e. covering the normal curriculum in less time, the essential characteristic of intensitiveness is that a substantial amount of time per day is devoted to the course of study, so it is possible to have extended intensive programs. An example is Cornell University's FALCON program where students spend a full academic year in a program of intensive language learning. Of course, intensive language programs are not necessarily or even usually content-based. (It is arguable, though, that a highly intensive language program, where many hours per day are devoted to study of the TL, can have an immersion effect even if it isn't content-based study.)

In the context of the ULTRA project, what is meant by 'immersion' is content-based instruction, and what is meant by 'intensive' is 'condensed'. The content of the Chinese course given in Australia was "Chinese Cultural History" and the content of the English course delivered in China was "History and Culture of Major English-Speaking Countries". It was not possible to have exactly parallel intensive courses in Australia and China. The intensive Chinese course in Australia ran four hours a night, four nights a week, but in China, where the students already had a heavy timetable, the most intensive course that could be arranged was eight hours a week. Intensitiveness was thus relative. **Figure 3** shows the breakdown of intensive and non-intensive courses offered at Edith Cowan and at Guangzhou, subdivided into immersion and non-immersion.

The ULTRA project is an inspiring one because it was an exercise in international networking. It grew out of a longstanding arrangement between Edith Cowan and Guangzhou to exchange two staff annually, which had enabled nearly thirty staff to be exchanged over a period of

Figure 3 - The range of course types in the ULTRA study

		INTENSIVE		NON-INTENSIVE	
		IMMERSION	NON-IMMERSION	IMMERSION	NON-IMMERSON
BEGINNERS	CHINESE (ECU)	Chinese Cultural History 16 hrs/week 1994 Feb - June 12 non-award students completing	16 hrs per week 1992 March - June 13 non-award students completing	Chinese Cultural History 8 hrs/week 1994 Feb - Nov 12 non-award students	8 hrs per week 1992 Feb - Nov 12 First year students completing (regular beginners' course)
	ENGLISH (GFLU)				
	CHINESE (ECU)			Chinese Cultural History 6 hrs per week 11 non-award students (7 completing) 1993 Feb - Nove	6 hrs per week 8 students (5 completing) 1993 Feb - Nov (3rd year Chinese major course)
	ENGLISH (GFLU)	History and Culture of Major English Speaking Countries 8 hrs per week 1994 Aug - Dec Student group to be determined	8 hrs per week 1992 Aug - Dec 3rd Year Spanish major students (13)		4 hrs per week 1992/3 Aug - June 3rd Year French major students (14)

(Source: Malcolm, 1994: Figure 1)

years and obviously had led to the establishment of good links between the two institutions. The planners at Edith Cowan University received advice in the initial stages from two Canadian experts on immersion education, Dr Merrill Swain, of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and Dr Marjorie Wesche, of the University of Ottawa. The research was conducted in three phases, with the Australian side of the project one semester ahead of the Chinese side, utilising the different academic years of the northern and southern hemispheres to allow scholars from the respective institutions to consult with one another and achieve the greatest possible degree of coordination. Furthermore, the

Chinese intensive and immersion courses at Edith Cowan were conducted by visiting lecturers from Guangzhou. The same lecturer who had taught the intensive and non-intensive English course in Guangzhou participated in the immersion Chinese classes. The coordinator of the English program at Guangzhou also spent six months at Edith Cowan preparing materials for the immersion English program to be taught in China. The intensive Chinese course at Edith Cowan was partially taught by a lecturer also teaching in the control Chinese class. There was thus a complex web of networking between the two institutions that enabled close interaction (Malcolm, 1992; Malcolm and McGregor, 1994).

Phase 1, which commenced in Australia in March 1992 and in Guangzhou in September 1992, was concerned with the teaching and evaluation of intensive and non-intensive courses. Phase 2 of the project involved the teaching and evaluation of immersion in comparison with non-immersion courses. Final evaluation is presently being carried out at Edith Cowan. At the time of writing only tentative results were available, as follows.

At Edith Cowan, in the intensive v non-intensive beginners classes, the intensive group had significantly better results in written and overall scores. In the immersion v normal third year course classes, the immersion group had significantly better results in the written post-tests, but not in the oral.

An extension of the experiment allowing for a three-way comparison was carried out in 1994 with larger numbers. Beginners were taught in two immersion courses (one intensive, over one semester, and one non-intensive, over two semesters) and compared with the normal internal beginners class through a common proficiency examination. Preliminary results of the intensive immersion course showed greater proficiency in listening and reading than in speaking and writing. No other results were available at the time of writing.

With respect to student attitudes, students did not give overwhelming endorsement of the immersion approach in either the third year or the beginners immersion courses, though without exception they showed themselves to be stimulated by the approach and eager to continue to study Chinese. The immersion approach necessitated students' using each

other as learning resources, which produced strong group cohesion. At the same time, the intensity of the experience produced great strain.

At Guangzhou, the third year intensive v non-intensive courses produced similar results to those obtained at Edith Cowan. The achievement test clearly favoured the intensive group but in the oral test there was no significant difference. Results for the immersion courses at Guangzhou were not yet available at time of writing.

Statistical details of the results summarised above are given in Malcolm, 1994. In general, the students in all the experimental groups did as well or better than the students in the regular groups. The motivational effect of intensive learning was apparent, but the downside of this was that for every five students who were motivated by intensive learning there seemed to be one or two who could not sustain the pace. The researchers' tentative conclusions were that immersion can be used sucessfully in higher education degree courses and that it may be more effective than existing course approaches for some students.

FORMATION OF AALIT

In 1993 Michael Berthold organised the formation of the Australian Association of Language Immersion Teachers (AALIT), and an inaugural conference was held in Newcastle, New South Wales. This year the second bienniel conference will be held in Queensland in June. A journal, called 'AALIT', appears twice-yearly. Members of the organisation are drawn from primary, secondary and tertiary levels, which is indicative of the nature of language education in Australia, where the different levels of language educators are increasingly tending to engage in dialogue across levels and are contributing to each other. At present AALIT has members from all Australian states and also from New Zeáland, Canada, the Netherlands and Switzerland. It may be that this journal has the potential to become not only a source of information but a vehicle for greater contact between immersion educators in different countries.

CONCLUSIONS

Major obstacles to the growth of immersion programs in schools in Australia are the diversity of languages being studied and lack of articulation between programs. In the political context of multicultural Australia there is little likelihood that these conditions will change. Related to them is the difficulty of staffing immersion programs, which is the biggest problem. There is a great deal of interest in immersion at present because of a perception that it can improve and enrich language learning. However, experimentation with new forms of language teaching and learning in the absence of ongoing research validating the effectiveness of programs could eventually lead to waning interest of educational authorities with consequent reduction of funding.

In universities there are organisational obstacles to the implementation of immersion as well as a lack of acceptance that the approach will fit in with the broad aims of university language programs. It is significant that immersion programs have only been integrated into tertiary courses in the area of teacher training. Despite these problems, the level of interest is leading to some ingenious approaches. Of particular interest is the focus on combining elements of intensive form-focused instruction and immersion, exemplified by the ULTRA study and by Murdoch and James Cook Universities' in-country study programs. Much of the impetus seems to be coming from the Australian governments' drive to promote the growth of Asian language learning and the willingness of Australian universities to participate in the current national reorientation towards Asia.

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